

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
HABITAT PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE
HABITAT ENHANCEMENT AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PROPOSAL**

Game Branch / HPC Project Number: 12-202

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: Babbitt Ranch Grassland Restoration

Region and Game Management Unit: Region II / GMU 9

Local Habitat Partnership Committee (LHPC):

- Williams / Flagstaff

Was the project presented to the LHPC?

YES[] NO[X]

Has this project been submitted in previous years? YES[] NO[X]

If Yes, was it funded? YES[] NO[] → **Funded HPC Project #(s):**

Project Type: Mechanical removal of pinyon and juniper

Brief Project Summary: Historic grassland areas have been encroached on by young pinyon and juniper trees. This has reduced habitat available for grassland species such as antelope, and reduced forage production needed by elk and antelope. This project will remove the invading trees from 1000 acres to restore its productivity.

Big Game Wildlife Species to Benefit: Elk, Antelope

Implementation Schedule (Month/Day/Year):

Project Start Date: 6/1/2013

Project End Date: 10/31/2014

Environmental Compliance:

NEPA Completed: Yes[] No[X] N/A[]

Projected Completion Date: 5/30/2013

State Historic Preservation Office - Archaeological Clearance:

Yes[] No[X] N/A[]

Projected Completion Date: 5/30/2013

Arizona Game and Fish Department EA Checklist: N/A[]

To be Completed by: Steve Cassady

Projected Completion Date: 5/30/2013

PROJECT FUNDING

Special Big Game License Tag Funds Requested:

\$ 40,000

Cost Share or Matching Funds:

\$ 313,250

Total Project Costs:

\$ 353,250

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Applicant (please print):

Babbitt Ranches

Address:

P.O. Box 520

Flagstaff, AZ. 86002

E-mail:

COBar@BabbittRanches.com

Telephone: (928) 774-6199

Date: Aug. 27, 2012

AGFD Contact and Phone No. (If applicant is not AGFD personnel):

John Goodwin, (928) 779-1208 or Steve Cassady (928) 214-1270

Project has been coordinated with: Steve Cassady, Al Eiden, Colby Walton

NEED STATEMENT – PROBLEM ANALYSIS:

Areas that were historic grasslands have been encroached on by young pinyon and juniper trees. This has reduced forage quality and quantity available to elk and antelope, reduced antelope fawn cover and increased antelope vulnerability to predation. This project will remove young trees from 1000 acres as part of an ongoing grassland restoration project. Babbitt Ranch has already invested more than \$ 2,000,000 and treated + 30,000 acres in a restoration project that is intended to treat + 40,000 acres.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- (1) Increase forage quantity and quality
- (2) Increase plant species diversity and thereby improve nutrition
- (3) Improve antelope fawn cover
- (4) Reduce antelope vulnerability to predators
- (5) Restore historic grasslands and reconnect fragmented grassland habitats.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND STRATEGIES:

Since 2004 Babbitt Ranches has treated more than 30,000 acres and plans to continue restoration on another 10,000 acres. Previous funding has come from Babbitt Ranch, AGFD, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Arizona Department of Agriculture and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The area being treated is a checkerboard of private sections and Arizona State Land Department sections. Various grants have restrictions that require the funds only be used on private land. Other funding sources can be used on either private or State lands.

Currently, Babbitt Ranches has an AGFD Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) grant (\$156,250) and a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) grant (\$50,000) that can only be used on private land. Babbitt Ranch has received an Arizona Department of Agriculture (ADA) grant (\$107,000) that can be used to treat State Trust land and will use this HPC funding to also treat State trust lands. By pairing these grants, Babbitt Ranch can fully treat both State and private lands needing restoration (see attached maps).

Archaeological surveys and SHPO concurrence have already been received for the LIP and ADA grants and work is ongoing. Archaeological surveys are underway on the areas being funded by FWS and will be completed in fall 2012. Treatment will begin when SHPO approval is received. HPC funds will be used on the adjacent State Trust sections. Babbitt Ranches will apply for a Land Treatment Permit from Az. State Land Department as soon as HPC funds are allocated. Approval of this permit will take 60-90 days; archaeological surveys will be done by State Land Department personnel as part of the permit approval. (The SLD permit is only valid for 1 year; therefore, Babbitt's will apply for it once funding is secured to insure all work on the SLD sections will be completed on time).

The topography is gently rolling; grasslands occur in the deeper soils in the draws and swales. Old growth pinyon-juniper occur on the shallow soiled, rocky ridges. Restoration treatments will only occur on the sites with deeper soils where forage production can be enhanced.

Babbitt Ranch purchased a skid steer and grinder attachment for use on the restoration work. Ranch personnel will be used to mulch the small and medium sized trees. Trees with trunk diameters greater than 8" will be left. This will result in open grassland or savannah-grassland conditions after treatment.

PROJECT LOCATION:

Babbitt Ranch will apply for a SLD permit to treat areas in Township 27 N., Range 4 E., portions of Sections 20, 22, 28, 30 and 32. HPC funds will be used to treat 1000 acres in these sections; Babbitt Ranch will use ranch funds to complete the work in these sections.

LAND OWNERSHIP AT THE PROJECT SITE(S):

(if the project area is private property, please state specifically and provide the landowner's name)

- HPC funds will be used to treat Arizona State Land Department sections. Other funds will treat Babbitt Ranches private lands and there is an AGFD landowner agreement in place to cover this treatment.

IF PRIVATE PROPERTY, IS THERE A COOPERATIVE BIG GAME STEWARDSHIP or LANDOWNER AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE LANDOWNER AND THE DEPARTMENT?

YES[] NO[] N/A[]

HABITAT DESCRIPTION:

Gently rolling topography with grasslands dominating the deeper soils. Special and pinyon pine and Utah or one seed juniper on the rocky ridges.

ITEMIZED USE OF FUNDS:

Special Big Game License Tag Funds: These funds will pay for removal of pinyon-juniper encroaching on areas that were historically grassland habitat. A grinder will be used to mulch the trees. Treatment will cost \$40/per acre which covers the operating and maintenance costs of the equipment; therefore the requested funds will treat 1000 acres. If the operation/maintenance costs are less than \$40/acre, Babbitt Ranches will use any remaining funds to treat additional acres.

Cost Share or Matching Funds (for volunteer labor rates please refer to the worksheet below)

AGFD LIP grant - \$ 100,000 LIP + \$56,250 Babbitt match = \$156,250

U.S.FWS grant- \$ 40,000 FWS funds + \$10,000 Babbitt match = \$ 50,000

AZ. Dept. of Ag.- \$107,00

Contributions not listed as match:

- AGFD is providing \$5,000 of personnel time to conduct archaeological surveys for the FWS grant.
- NRCS funds from another grant (being used by Babbitt Ranch for grassland restoration (\$40,000).
- NRCS archaeological surveys

LIST COOPERATORS AND DESCRIBE POTENTIAL PARTICIPATION:

Arizona Game and Fish Department – funding and archaeological surveys

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – funding

Arizona Department of Agriculture - funding

Natural Resources Conservation Service –funding and archaeological surveys

Babbitt Ranches – funding and personnel support

WOULD IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PROJECT ASSIST IN PROVIDING, MAINTAINING, OR FACILITATING RECREATIONAL ACCESS?

YES[] NO[X] N/A[]

Babbitt Ranch is already open to public access.

PROJECT MONITORING PLAN:

AGFD will continue their standard big game surveys which will indicate if treatments are benefitting elk and antelope. Babbitt Ranch has a photo plot system in place which will show vegetation response to the treatments.

PROJECT MAINTENANCE:

Babbitt Ranch will maintain the treated acres by burning any new pinyon-juniper seedlings.

PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT TO BE FILED BY:

John Goodwin on behalf of Babbitt Ranch.

TREE CLEARING/REMOVAL PROJECTS *(please use the worksheet below):*

ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT **TREE CLEARING/REMOVAL WORKSHEET**

PROJECT TITLE: Babbitt Ranch Grassland Restoration

- 1) **What is the estimated acreage of the project?**
1000 acres to be treated with HPC funds.
- 2) **How are the trees going to be cleared? (agra axe, chain saw, grubbing, push, chaining):**
A Grinder will be used to cut/mulch the trees.
- 3) **What is the estimated number of trees per acre?**
Highly variable but generally 10-20/acre.
- 4) **Describe trees to be cleared (species, estimated diameter, single stem, multi-stem):**
Pinyon pine, Utah juniper, one seed juniper less than 8" in diameter.
- 5) **Describe terrain (slope, soil type, rocks)**
Gently rolling topography; deeper soils in the draws and shallow soil, rocky ridges.
- 6) **Please list any special land management status for the project site (e.g. Wilderness, National Park, National Monument). If private land, list landowner.**
Private land owned by Babbitt Ranch.
- 7) **Please provide the following information about access to the proposed site:**
Type of access (mark one): ☒ 2x4 vehicles ☐ 4x4 only ☐ Foot only**

**If foot access only: Distance in miles: Approx. hiking time:

Does access to this site require crossing private or tribal lands? YES ☒ NO ☐

Crosses Babbitt Ranch private land.

Is the site relatively accessible for tree removal equipment? YES ☒ NO ☐

Please describe any restrictions to public access:

None. Babbitt Ranch allows public access to all of their private land.



